'[A] mere cloak for their proud contempt and antipathy towards the African race':

Imagining Britain's West India Regiments in the Caribbean, 1795-1838

Professor David Lambert

Department of History

University of Warwick

Coventry, CV4 7AL

+44 (0)24 76523408

d.lambert@warwick.ac.uk

Abstract

This article examines opposition to the creation and presence of the West India Regiments in Britain's Caribbean colonies from the establishment of these military units in the mid-to-late 1790s to the formal ending of slavery in the region. Twelve regiments were originally created amid the twin crises associated with Britain's struggle with Revolutionary France and the horrendous losses to disease suffered by British forces in the Caribbean. Their rank-and-file were mainly comprised of men of African descent, most of whom had been bought by the British Army from slave traders or, after the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807, recruited from among people 'liberated' by the Royal Navy. While there was nothing new in

using men of African descent, free and enslaved, in the service of the European empires in the Americas, such enrolments had tended to be for fixed or limited periods. Thus, the establishment of the West India Regiments as permanent military units, whose soldiers were uniformed, armed, and trained along European lines, was unprecedented – and bitterly opposed by West Indian colonists. Indeed, although white West Indians were concerned about the protection of the colonies from both external and internal foes, they were highly sceptical about whether arming (formerly) enslaved people of African descent would serve to promote their security or might, in fact, imperil the system of racial slavery on which they relied.

The tensions arising from the establishment of the West India Regiments have been examined by other historians. However, much of the previous focus has been on the political conflict between the British authorities and local colonial legislatures, and on legal challenges to the Regiments, especially during the early years of their existence. In contrast, this article takes a wider view of opposition to the Regiments over a longer period up to the formal ending of slavery. In so doing, it examines how the Regiments' rank-and-file were viewed by white West Indians and the deep anxieties this reveals among colonists. The article also considers the efforts made by the Regiments' proponents and commanders to promulgate more favourable images of black soldiers, images that became more prominent by the 1830s. The more general argument is that this struggle around how the West India Regiments' rank-and-file should be viewed was part of a broader 'war of representation' over the image of 'the African' during the age of abolition.

Keywords: Caribbean; age of abolition; slavery; West Indian colonists; 'war of representation'

'[A] mere cloak for their proud contempt and antipathy towards the African race':

Imagining Britain's West India Regiments in the Caribbean, 1795-1838

Introduction

Writing of early nineteenth-century Jamaica, author J. A. Stewart described the public revulsion at the spectacle of deserters 'pinioned and in a miserable plight' as they were conveyed to the local military head-quarters. What made this a 'novel and revolting sight' was that these were white deserters being guarded by black soldiers, men from the 2nd West India Regiment.[1] This unit was originally one of twelve that had been raised by the British between 1795 and 1798 during the twin military and demographic crises represented by the struggle with Revolutionary France and the decimation of newly-arrived European forces by disease.[2] Although not the intention, the Regiments were soon mainly made up of enslaved Africans purchased directly from slave traders. Such a course of action was highly controversial, especially in the eyes of white residents in the British West Indies who were opposed to the establishment of permanent military units raised in such a way. While they shared the concern of the British military authorities about the protection of the colonies from both external and internal foes, they were doubtful about whether arming (formerly) enslaved people of African descent would serve to promote security or might, in fact, imperil the system of colonial slavery. Indeed, to understand why Jamaica's white inhabitants viewed the scene described by Stewart as a 'novel and revolting sight', it needs to be understood in the context of the stark racial divisions that characterised slave society on the island and elsewhere in the British West Indies. As such, it represented one instance of a revolution in the socio-racial order, and the Regiments became a significant source of conflict between Caribbean colonists and their colonial legislatures on the one hand, and the British military authorities on the other.

The tensions arising from the establishment of the West India Regiments have been examined by other historians, most notably by Roger Buckley.[3] However, much of the previous focus has been on the political conflict between the British authorities and local colonial legislatures, and on legal challenges to the Regiments, especially during the early years of their existence. In contrast, this article takes a wider view of opposition to the Regiments over the longer period from their establishment to the formal ending of slavery in the late 1830s. In so doing, it examines how the Regiments' rank-and-file were viewed by white West Indians and the deep anxieties this reveals among colonists. The article also considers the efforts made by proponents and commanders of the West India Regiments to promulgate more favourable images of the black soldiers, which came more to the fore by the 1830s. The larger argument is that the discursive struggle over the West India Regiments' rank-and-file was part of the broader 'war of representation' over the figure of the African subject during the age of abolition.[4]

The purchase of enslaved Africans to form the bulk of the West India Regiments was part of a long history of military slavery across a number of regions.[5] In the Caribbean itself, Spain had used armed enslaved people in its earliest conquests, while the English, French and other European powers employed them from the seventeenth century. There was great ambivalence about this practice among white colonists of the region, however: while evidence showed they could be trustworthy and effective, this sat uneasily with hardening racial ideologies in the eighteenth century and the economic self-interest of slaveholders.[6] Such ambivalence was acute during the Seven Years War, when British West Indian colonists were more concerned about slave rebellions than French attacks. Nonetheless, there was a great deal of ad hoc arming of enslaved people in response to particular exigencies and local crises, and 'the greater scale of the conflict necessitated a greater involvement of slaves and free blacks'. This, in turn, set

precedents for the arming of slaves during the American Revolutionary War. Overall, Philip Morgan and Andrew O'Shaughnessy note that,

> To stress how much of a radical departure arming slaves was from so-called
> civilized practice, how exceptional a measure it was, does not seem fully to
> describe the reality of much of slave life in the New World. Arming slaves was
> a dangerous expedient, but one resorted to frequently.[7]

Yet, while the use of men of African descent in the Caribbean, free as well as enslaved, in military and pioneering roles was well established by the late eighteenth century, partly due to the expansion of slavery and the relative decline of European populations, these enrolments tended to be for fixed and limited periods. Thus, the establishment of the West India Regiments as *permanent* military units from 1795, whose soldiers were uniformed, armed, and trained along European lines, represented what Buckley termed an 'unprecedented step' in the Caribbean – and one that was bitterly opposed by colonists in the region.[8]

When the West India Regiments were originally established, the British military authorities had in mind three routes for raising the troops: purchases from 'patriotic' West Indian slave-owners, volunteers from among free people of African descent and, if necessary, African men purchased directly from slave traders. Yet, amid little cooperation from the colonial authorities, this policy could not be implemented because few slave-owners would sell their best enslaved workers for the price offered and most free people of colour were unwilling to exchange their relative freedom for military service.[9] As a result, the only option was to buy recruits directly from trans-Atlantic slave traders. Indeed, Buckley has claimed that 'the British government was itself, perhaps, the largest individual buyer of slaves' in the late eighteenth

and early nineteenth centuries, purchasing more than 13,000 enslaved Africans for the Regiments.[10] Even after abolition, the government determined that the trans-Atlantic trade would continue to serve British imperial interests, this time in the form of Liberated Africans seized by the Royal Navy and recruited into the West India Regiments.[11] Between 1808 and 1815, approximately 2,500 men were enlisted from a variety of recruiting sources including from among Liberated Africans. There was a drop in demand following the end of war with France, before recruitment picked up again in the 1820s as Britain sought to garrison its West African possessions with African soldiers, including Liberated Africans and those raised at Sierra Leone. Maeve Ryan notes that while the exact number of Liberated African enlisted at Freetown is not known, 'it was sufficiently high that a recruiter remarked in 1837 that "the whole of our African corps, and a great part of the West India Regiments that serve in the West Indies, are supplied from the liberated Africans at Sierra Leone"'.[12] There were also efforts to recruit formerly enslaved people into the Regiments in the Caribbean itself.[13]

The original British authorization of the first West Indian Regiments had been spurred on by setbacks across the Caribbean theatre during the war with Revolutionary France: its forces suffered in St Domingue, were forced out at Guadeloupe in December 1794 and abandoned St Lucia in July 1795, and faced serious revolts in Grenada and St Vincent in 1795, as well as the Trelawny Town Maroons uprising in Jamaica. Together these 'constituted one of the most serious imperial crises ever' and occurred at a time when British forces were being killed and incapacitated by disease.[14] Yet, although there were compelling reasons to employ soldiers of African descent in the Caribbean, it raised 'fundamental problems for the plantation system'.[15] For instance, it was a dangerous acknowledgement of the shortage of white manpower. Nor did it sit easily with white racist stereotypes of people of African descent as either dishonourable cowards, and thus incapable of serving as soldiers, or as savage brutes and,

therefore, uncontrollable and dangerous. The existence of these soldiers might even serve to contest such stereotypes, thus undermining the racial myths that justified slavery. Hence, while the employment of the West India Regiments may have satisfied a British military need in the Caribbean, it was at odds with the dominant values characterising white colonial culture across the region.[16]

The arming of enslaved or formerly enslaved people in societies in which slavery was the central or dominant system of labour has attracted interest from scholars, often because of the apparent 'paradox' or 'oxymoron' it represents.[17] The classic work on the West India Regiments is Roger Buckley's *Slaves in Red Coats*, which addressed the origins, early service and disbandment of the majority of the units. This account was motivated by Buckley's view that British military historians had been largely uninterested in the Caribbean, while non-military historians and social scientists working on the region had tended to overlook the military dimensions of its history, focusing instead on the economic and social features of the plantation system. Buckley sought to demonstrate that the West India Regiments played a significant role in maintaining the British Empire in the Caribbean. As such, his work played something of a recuperative role regarding these units, sharing some continuity with earlier regimental histories, as well as anticipating more recent works on the contribution of Caribbean soldiers to Britain's twentieth-century global war efforts.[18]

Although published over thirty-five years ago, *Slaves in Red Coats* remains foundational for the study of the Regiments. Nonetheless, there are limitations to Buckley's account, many stemming from his chronological focus. First, Buckley was concerned with the period from 1795 to 1815. While the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars – and their immediate aftermath – saw the creation, expansion and disbandment of most of the Regiments, the 1st and

2nd West India Regiments endured, the 3rd was only disbanded in 1825 and reformed in 1840, and the 4th and 5th Regiments were briefly reformed in the 1860s. Put simply, the history of the Regiments extends well beyond the period under Buckley's consideration. Significantly, the late-slavery rebellions across the British West Indies (Barbados, 1816; Demerara, 1823; Jamaica, 1831-32), as well as the policies and processes associated with amelioration, emancipation and apprenticeship, fall outside his consideration. Second, while Buckley attended to opposition to the raising of the West India Regiments, his focus was primarily on legislative politics and legal challenges, especially in Jamaica.[19] Yet, Jamaica was an unusual case: its white elite successfully resisted the presence of West India troops until May 1801 and the troops were almost entirely withdrawn in 1819. In the late 1820s, only a single company of the 2nd West India Regiment was present in Jamaica, confined to Kingston.[20] The pattern across the Windward and Leeward Islands, the Bahamas and Honduras was different. The third and perhaps most significant feature of Buckley's work, and one which influences much of his argument, is his overwhelmingly positive opinion of the West India Regiments and their contribution to the British Caribbean colonies. He sought to demonstrate the loyalty and military capabilities of the soldiers, thus giving lie to the racist prejudices of white West Indian residents and the subsequent lack of regard from British military historians. Indeed, Buckley had no doubt that the complete 'Africanisation' of Britain's rank-and-file in the Caribbean would have made perfect sense for 'incontrovertible reasons of health, humanitarian considerations, economy, and military efficiency'.[21] At the same time, and partly by virtue of his chronological focus, he had relatively little to say about the policing function of the West India Regiments and their role in maintaining African and African-creole men, women and children in slavery.[22] As both victims and oppressors in Caribbean history, these soldiers are ambiguous figures who cannot be recuperated – nor less celebrated – in a straightforward way.

In the conclusions to *Slaves in Red Coats*, Buckley noted that 'more research is needed before a clear understanding of the impact of the British garrison on the development of West Indian racial attitudes is available' and he speculated about how their presence may have served to undermine white racism.[23]   However, by focusing primarily on formal political and legal opposition to the Regiments and understanding opposition to them as stemming from the bigoted *ignorance* of West Indian colonists and their agents, Buckley underestimated how deeply assumptions about the socio-racial order were embedded in everyday white West Indian culture. Brown notes that:

> Fears about what the slaves would do if armed may tell more about the anxieties and needs of the slaveholding class in the Americas than about the likely behaviour of enslaved men. Such anxieties, perhaps, arose as much from prejudice and ideology as from a careful mixture of probable outcomes.[24]

Such 'anxieties', 'prejudice' and 'ideology' were at the heart of white opposition to the establishment and presence of the West India Regiments in the Caribbean. They were manifestations of the intense 'negrophobia' that was habitual among white, slaveholding minorities in colonial slave societies. Indeed, the central issue for understanding the representation and image of the Regiments is not whether white West Indian assessments of the Regiments became less biased as the black soldiers 'proved' themselves, but rather to appreciate the deep-seated phobias, fantasies and fears that their presence provoked.[25] As this article will demonstrate, these colonial anxieties could be dramatically called forth by particular events and often endured *despite* the actual actions, achievements or military record of the black soldiers.

In order to examine the tensions around the West India Regiments beyond their formal political and legal manifestations, this article examines public responses to the West India Regiments among white colonial populations in the Caribbean during the period of slavery.[26] While it may have been the more privileged and powerful sections that played a disproportionate role in shaping these, or at least had their views recorded, this article is concerned less with the 'official' voice expressed by legislatures and in communications with the governors, and more on a broader, more inchoate, public discourse. While there are no social surveys to determine attitudes, reports do exist of public moods and general opinions, as well as accounts of rumours and hearsay, that reveal white West Indian fears and fantasies. In addition to Colonial and War Office papers, legislative minutes, local histories and travellers' accounts, a couple of types of sources are particularly useful in this regard. First, there are the letters, public statements and actions of officers commanding the various West India Regiments. These men were fully aware of the opprobrium that their soldiers faced, something they often complained about in correspondence with the War Office, where they reported slights and insults, tensions with the militia, and the rumours spread by critics. Second, colonial newspapers give some insight into the public image of the West India Regiments. They carried news of military actions, including those in which the Regiments were involved such as the capture of Guadeloupe in 1810, which involved some 2500 black troops among the expeditionary force of 6700. Although the Regiments were not singled-out, these reports may have improved white public opinion of them. Yet, despite the awarding of battle honours to the 1st and 4th West India Regiments for their actions at Dominica (1805), Martinique (1809) and Guadeloupe (1810), negative accounts continued to circulate. Such reports reflected and fed white anxieties, and commanding officers complained that they misrepresented facts and fanned the flames of public hostility.[27] Moreover, with colonial newspapers carrying regular reports of the arrival and departure of

army units, including companies and detachments from the West India Regiments, they served as a constant reminder of a presence that was deeply troubling to many West Indian colonists.

General Perceptions

From the emergence of discussions around establishing the West India Regiments in the 1790s, there was legislative opposition across the British West Indian colonies. Buckley has described Governor Balcarres' clashes with Jamaican planters in 1797 and 1798, but there was a similar reaction elsewhere.[28] For example, in 1798, the Antiguan Assembly was unanimous in its opposition to a plan to quarter the 8th West India Regiment on island because it was 'composed almost entirely of Africans, totally unacquainted with our language and customs, without the least Idea of Religion, and in the most barbarous and uncivilised state'. In a striking turn of phrase, the Assembly expressed fears about the effects of the presence of the West India Regiments on the enslaved populations, describing the 'Revolution [that] will take place in their minds' on encountering black soldiers.[29] Writing of the resistance to the scheme from the Barbados Assembly around the same time, local historian John Poyer noted that,

> Notwithstanding this just representation of the evils with which this scheme is evidently pregnant, in which all the other colonies concurred, government persisted in the dangerous design…And without pretending to the gift of prophecy, it may be hazarded, as no improbable conjecture, that, at no distant period of time, these faithless blacks, in conjunction with the national foe, or colonial traitors, will employ the arms, unwisely put into their hands, in murdering their officers; subverting the power of Britain in this hemisphere; and erecting the savage despotism of Africa on the ruins of English liberty.[30]

11

Political opposition reflected wider popular disquiet. Absentee planter William Young noted that '[t]here is something in the temper and constitution of these negro regiments which ever has been, and not unreasonably, a matter of distrust and jealousy to the colonists', while in his *Annals of Jamaica*, the Reverend George Bridges wrote of 'the obnoxious regiment of blacks' whose very presence served to 'harass the country'.[31] As such comments attest, the black soldiers of the West India Regiments became a focal point for a series of white (creole) fears – fears that they might turn their arms against their officers and white colonists, that they might conspire with enslaved rebels or the French, or simply that their presence might inspire ideas of equality among enslaved people, and thus provoke a 'Revolution…in their minds'.[32]

Such sentiments were strongest amid the revolutionary ferment of the 1790s and early 1800s. Indeed, in their attacks on the West India Regiments, colonists portrayed them as potential 'brigands', the term the British used to describe the self-liberating enslaved people and others who fought against their Caribbean empire in this period.[33] The Haitian Revolution loomed large, of course. The spectre of a mass revolt by enslaved people, occurring not far from the chief British colony of Jamaica, would haunt white colonists for a generation. Moreover, Britain's catastrophic military intervention in St Domingue (1793-98) had not only failed to suppress the revolution, but had seen the defeat of British troops by disease and the formerly-enslaved forces of Toussaint L'Ouverture.[34] With revolutionary ideas spreading across the region, the deliberate policy of arming enslaved people was seen as a great folly, particularly if these troops were sent to serve in revolutionary 'hot-spots'. For example, the Jamaica Assembly warned that '[t]he idea of sending negroes from Jamaica to St. Domingo to return with French opinions conveys a horror to their minds'.[35] The events in St Domingue also served to reinforce notions of the 'natural' violence and savagery supposedly exhibited by men of African descent, particularly those brought direct from Africa. As one observer put it, '[t]he

arming and training so many of these hirelings, after the mournful scenes and horrid barbarities of their committing we have witnessed in St. Domingo, is surely not the prudent dictates of wisdom'.[36] Such sentiments were further reinforced by mutinies among West India Regiment soldiers, a theme that will be addressed later.

It is important to stress that it was not that white Caribbean colonists were opposed to the arming of enslaved people in all circumstances. Indeed, opponents of the West India Regiments set much store by the use of irregular units against enslaved rebels and foreign invaders alike. So called 'black-shot' were soldier-slaves raised in military emergencies. For example, even amid a general uprising of enslaved people, as occurred during Fédon's Rebellion in Grenada (1795-97), slaveholders armed trusted enslaved men and formed them into a ranger corps. Indeed, the military formations that came to comprise the initial cores of the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th West India Regiments were created in just this way. Held to be bound by the ties of paternalism, such black-shot were supposedly loyal to the masters who armed and often led them. Some might subsequently be rewarded with manumission and go on to serve in colonial militias, while others were returned to their usual roles when the emergency was over.[37] With the West India Regiments, however, it was the shift from ad hoc units to permanent corps that was deemed objectionable, serving as a constant reminder of the white colonists' reliance on black soldiers and representing a new and potentially disruptive element within the socio-racial order of the Caribbean colonies. There was also the matter of control: whereas units of rangers were usually led by slaveholders-cum-militia officers, the new West India Regiments had regular officers in command and their deployment was in the hands of the metropolitan War Office. As a result, they could by 'foisted' upon unwilling colonies or sent elsewhere after being raised locally. This issue of control also encompassed whether West India Regiment soldiers were subject to local slave laws.[38] A further source of white anxiety

stemmed from uncertainty over what would happen to the soldiers when they were discharged or when units were disbanded, something that also turned on their ambiguous social and legal status.[39] In short, West Indian colonists fundamentally distrusted these well-armed, trained black troops that lay *beyond the control of the local slaveholders* and feared that they posed an existential threat to the slaveholding order. Such soldiers were nothing more than potential 'brigands'.

Even after the initial opposition to their establishment had passed, white West Indians continued to express anxieties about the Regiments and pointed to mutinies in the first decade of the nineteenth century as proof that such fears were well grounded.[40] For the abolitionist and government official James Stephen, popular animosity to the West India Regiments was 'a strong illustration of the baneful effects of colonial prejudices' that persisted despite the positive reports made by commanding officers about their actions and the lives of British troops that were preserved by their use. Ultimately, Stephen put this down to the deeply racist culture that characterised the West Indian colonies: 'the jealousy which the white colonists profess of such defenders, is in great measure a mere cloak for their proud contempt and antipathy towards the African race'.[41] Significantly, he went on to compare the public discourse around West India Regiment soldiers with that concerning free people of colour. As has been argued elsewhere, the latter were 'liminal' figures in Caribbean slave societies that 'occupied a position of "in-betweenness" and ambiguity'. Dressed in the same basic uniform as the rank-and-file of the British foot regiments (figure 1) and yet with uncertainty about their legal status and doubts about where they loyalties lay, the West India Regiment soldier was another liminal figure and like others – free people of colour especially – were a focus for white colonial anxieties, apprehensive representations and projects of racial re-inscription intended to put or keep them in the 'right place'.[42] Moreover, by implicitly subverting the hierarchies and

systems of authority that characterised Caribbean slave societies, black soldiers occupied a status similar to other figures seen as potential agitators by white colonists: missionaries and abolitionists.[43]

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

In response to such colonial anxieties, the British authorities made efforts to assuage public concerns. For example, regiments, companies and detachments were regularly redeployed in response to white fears that they would form local attachments with enslaved people that might militate against their loyalty to the authorities.[44] Black troops were also confined to garrisons removed from major settlements, such as Fort Augusta in Jamaica, Monk's Hill (Great George Fort) in Antigua, Prince Rupert's Bay in Dominica and St Joseph's barracks, Trinidad.[45] Finally, the proportion of black to white troops in each colony was monitored, such that soldiers of African descent were to be limited to a third of the total.[46] As to whether such measures worked and West Indian colonists became more comfortable with the presence of the Regiments, Buckley suggests that 'there was a noticeable waning of colonial efforts to rid the British Caribbean of black regiments' by the early 1800s.[47] However, writing of this period, Brigadier General Thomas Hislop – an acute observer of the Regiments and their social position who raised the 11th, served in the 8th and later became lieutenant-governor of Trinidad – claimed that they actually faced greater public hostility in the early nineteenth century. This was because once the immediate threat to the West Indian colonies had passed following the arrival in the region of the Abercromby expedition in 1796 and the British withdrawal from St Domingue, white colonists saw less need for the Regiments to defend them:

Their utility was then universally acknowledged, and it is not improbable but that many persons, whose principal reliance was then on the exertions of the Black Troops, have since, (the danger being passed) been among the most strenuous in representing them as dangerous to ourselves, and contemptible in the eyes of an Enemy.[48]

Moreover, mutinies among the Regiments in 1802 and 1808 certainly provoked negative sentiments (see below). While Buckley was right that formal opposition to the Regiments, including legal challenges, may have declined, there is not much evidence for a broader shift in white public opinion. Writing of the period from the end of the wars with France to emancipation, Brian Dyde also suggests that the image of the Regiments among white colonists may have been improved by the counter-insurgency role they played during the slave insurrections of 1816 and 1823.[49] Yet, as will be discussed below, there is little particular evidence for this either.

It might have been thought that following the cessation of conflict with France in 1815 and the reduction in the number of West India Regiments, which were reduced from eight to three by 1819, they would slip from public concern. However, the number of white troops in the region was also reduced. By 1819, there were 2291 West India Regiment soldiers, less than half the number of 1810. However, the number of other regular troops had declined even more rapidly, from 15,478 to only 5316 by the same year. Although, the target ratio of two-to-one would appear to have been maintained, any West Indian with knowledge of the state of the imperial armed forces, perhaps gleaned through socialising with officers, would realise that such figures hid much higher rates of incapacity among white soldiers. For example, in 1819, more than 1 in 10 of the non-West India Regiment soldiers were deemed sick (as compared with less than

1 in 30 for the West India Regiments), making the overall ratio of white to black soldiers that were fit for duty just over two-to-one. Separating out the northern Jamaica Command, which included Honduras and the Bahamas, from the southern Windward and Leeward Islands Command, however, reveals variations, with fewer than two white soldiers per black soldier across the latter. Moreover, at some stations – Trinidad, St Lucia, Antigua, St Kitts and Montserrat – soldiers from the West India Regiments or the Royal West India Rangers, which was a convict unit made up of men of African descent, made up the majority of the garrison and almost two-fifths of that at the Command's headquarters in Barbados.[50] Overall, the British Caribbean colonies actually became *more* reliant on black soldiers after 1815 and they remained a troubling presence for white West Indians.

Triggering Anxiety

While there was an underlying animosity towards the presence of the West India Regiments in the British West Indies throughout the period of slavery, certain occurrences intensified public hostility. Most significant were uprisings among the troops, 'mutinies' as they were rather over-dramatically termed given their scale. In the first half-century after the establishment of the Regiments, there were three such events involving men from the 8th in Dominica in April 1802 (the so-called 'Black Man' mutiny), the 2nd in Jamaica in May 1808, and the 1st in Trinidad in June 1837.[51] While relatively minor events from a military perspective and supressed within a matter of days, their wider social and political significance should not be underestimated. In the post-mutiny fall-out, when courts-martial and courts of enquiry were convened, there was a public clamour to understand their origins and apportion blame. Following the 1808 mutiny in Jamaica, for example, there was an extended dispute between the commanding officer and the Assembly, which wanted to conduct its own investigation.

This led to a major breakdown in relations between the military and civilian authorities that imperilled colonial support for the British army's presence in the colony.[52]

The early nineteenth-century mutinies were read as evidence of the general character of black soldiers. Of the 1802 'Black Man' mutiny, for example, it was asserted that '[t]he late ferocity of one of the Negro Corps in Dominica where they murdered their officers…is a striking presage of their future conduct'.[53] Indeed, commanding officers appear to have been at least as concerned about the reputational damage caused by the mutinies as by the events themselves. As General William A. Villettes wrote of the Jamaica mutiny:

> I have no doubt your Lordships will readily conceive the general alarm which this unfortunate event created throughout the Island, and the increase of prejudice and rancour which it has occasioned against this corps, particularly amongst those, who at this moment are glad to have every opportunity of opposing the views, and embarrassing the measures of His Majesty's Government.[54]

In such a context, rumours spread rapidly about unrest and further plots among the troops. For instance, a few days later, a white creole wife of an officer of the Royal Artillery heard from a gunner that another mutiny was about to take place among a detachment of the 2nd West India Regiment stationed at Port Royal. Local militia forces were mustered and proceeded to march on garrison without seeking to verify the story or make contact with the garrison's commanding officer. On arrival, the garrison was found to be in a state of calm and no evidence of a plot was discovered.[55] James Stephen would later claim that the colonial authorities and their agents made co-ordinated efforts to spread 'false grounds of alarm…until they succeeded in getting a

large part of the black corps disbanded'.[56] Whether this and other such alarms were 'real or pretended' is perhaps beside the point. Either way, they speak to the colonial anxieties generated by the presence of West India Regiment soldiers.[57]

The consequences of mutinies for the general discourse on the West India Regiments went beyond the immediate society in which they occurred. The authorities were faced with the question of what to do with mutinous Regiments, once the ring-leaders had been executed and others involved had been sentenced to transportation or other punishment. With local calls for their removal, units had to be sent elsewhere – a decision greeted with horror in the colonies that might be their destination. For example, after the 1802 Dominica mutiny, the 8th was initially withdrawn to Martinique, but its long-term future was in question because 'the most uneasy sensations will naturally be excited' wherever it might subsequently be stationed. In the end, the Regiment was sent on to Barbados, where there was a large British force to watch over it, and then reduced (i.e. broken up).[58] Likewise, following the 1808 mutiny, the 2nd was initially sent from Jamaica to assist with driving French forces from Santo Domingo and later relocated to the Bahamas.[59]

Second only to mutinies in generating disquiet around the West India Regiments were events that might have been thought to increase white confidence in them: rebellions and revolts among the enslaved populations. There were three of these in the British West Indies in the early nineteenth century. During the 1816 rebellion in Barbados, 150 men of the 1st West India Regiment, commanded by Major Cassidy, clashed with approximately 400 enslaved rebels at Bayley's plantation in the parish of St Philip. This was the climax of the rebellion when the rebel leaders may have been killed.[60] Seven years later, a detachment of the same Regiment was present during the insurrection in Demerara. The militia was called out to patrol

Georgetown, 'while the 1ˢᵗ West India Regiment and a detachment of the 21ˢᵗ Regiment, all under Captain Stewart of the former Regiment, marched up the coast towards the seat of the trouble at Mahaica'. Two further companies of 1ˢᵗ West India Regiment also arrived from Barbados on 26 September but were 'hardly required'. Subsequently, small detachments of West India Regiment soldiers were posted across the colony in an effort to maintain order.[61]

As has already been noted, Dyde suggests that the counter-insurgency role played by the West India Regiments in these insurrections could have helped to improve how they were viewed by white colonists.[62] While this may have been the case in the long-term, the immediate responses were characterised by suspicion and anxiety, despite the fact that in both Barbados and Demerara, it was West India Regiment soldiers who were 'put in advance, and by whose fire the insurgents were dispersed'.[63] For example, following the circulation of correspondence unfavourable to the conduct of the Regiments' soldiers during the 1816 Barbados revolt, the colonial governor was quick to state that 'any misconduct imputed to the Corps in question, or indeed to any of the Black Troops within this command, must have arisen from misrepresentations'.[64] There was no evidence of any misconduct among the black soldiers and yet the circulation of negative reports, presumably by white slaveholders to their metropolitan contacts, demonstrates continuing efforts to discredit the Regiments. West India Regiment soldiers also helped to end the Demerara slave rebellion and yet local colonists were soon 'anxiously looking forward' to arrival of new reinforcements and 'most desirous to have the black troops removed from the outposts where they were stationed on the coast'. White colonists were fearful were that small, dispersed groups of West India Regiment soldiers would be drawn into 'habits of too much intimacy with the male slaves and of connection with the female'. As a first step, they urged that all three companies of black troops should be brought together in a single body in Georgetown. In fact, the imperial authorities had already begun to

make such plans. The company of the 1st West India Regiment that had been involved in the counter-insurgency in Demerara was withdrawn along with those two companies newly-arrived from Barbados, and no black soldiers would be present in the colonies that would come to form British Guiana until the late 1830s.[65] There are clear similarities between post-mutiny and post-rebellion redeployments and both speak to the same hostility and fear among white West Indians.

While it was unsurprising that major events such as mutinies and rebellions provoked strong reactions towards the West India Regiments, even seemingly minor events could also trigger outbreaks of colonial anxiety. Reports of fracas and petty infringements of duty attracted attention in the colonial press. For example, while 'originating in a mere trivial dispute', an affray between men from the 1st West India Regiment and the Royal West India Rangers at St Ann's Garrison in Barbados, garnered press attention and was seen as revealing the general nature of black soldiers:

> we cannot withhold the observation which so naturally arises on connecting this event with others of a similar nature which have recently occurred in some of the other Garrisons in this Command – that His Majesty's service is never likely either to be honoured or benefited by the introduction of this turbulent and untractable class of men into the ranks of his Army.[66]

Likewise, alterations in how individual companies or detachments were deployed in particular colonies could spark conflict between the military and local civilian authorities. For instance, since arriving in Jamaica in 1801, the soldiers of the 2nd West India Regiment had been confined to Fort Augusta, while the companies of the British-raised regiments were deployed

across the island. As has been mentioned, the confinement of black troops in isolated sites was part of the '*modus vivendi* eventually worked out between the colonial party and London'.[67] Yet, this often left West India Regiment soldiers with little to do, while white soldiers were required to perform arduous duties seen to be detrimental to their health, such as repairing roads or fortifications. In late 1807, efforts were made to end this sub-optimal military deployment and the sop to local sensitivities that it represented with detachments of the 2nd at Fort Augusta exchanged with white troops at Up-Park Camp, and other West India Regiment detachments distributed elsewhere across Jamaica. As a result, by the end of 1808, there were large bodies of black soldiers at Up-Park Camp, Port Royal and Fort Augusta, plus smaller numbers elsewhere at Greenwich, Port Henderson, Kingston, Greys Penn, Government Penn and Carleton Penn.[68] This redeployment was strongly opposed by white Jamaicans, however, who petitioned the governor for all black troops to be returned to Fort Augusta.[69] Following the May 1808 mutiny and the discovery of an enslaved conspiracy in Kingston the year later, such concerns are perhaps unsurprising.[70] What they also indicate is the strength of the colonial anxieties surrounding the Regiments. It was not merely their (imagined) *conduct* that shaped how they were perceived, but their very presence that served to unsettle white colonists in the early nineteenth century.

Promoting the Troops

Strong local animosity towards the West India Regiments represented a major challenge for their supporters and especially for those who commanded them. In response, they fought hard to promote a more positive image of the Regiments, making deliberate public interventions to demonstrate the fidelity and steadfastness of their men, something that could earn them great personal unpopularity among white colonists. The issuing of General Orders to the troops, which were also printed in local *Royal Gazettes* and other newspapers, also served as a means

of communicating with the public beyond the garrison. As such, they were used to respond to, or pre-empt, criticisms of the West India Regiments.[71] Moreover, commanders sent a message about their confidence in their men by using them in high-profile roles, such as guarding their personal residences or those of colonial officials.[72] Such actions arose partly from the loyalty of commanders to their men, but these also served to contest local attitudes and opinions. In addition, they reflected concerns about the effects of public hostility on the troops themselves. For example, writing of his own black soldiers in Jamaica, Major-General Hugh Carmichael stated that 'nothing in my opinion is so likely to rouse their discontent at present, as the inveterate prejudice which so universally prevails against them in this island, and the apparent distrust of them which it must necessarily occasion'.[73] Hence, commanders sought to counter the potentially baneful effects of attacks on and criticism of the Regiments on the black soldiers themselves.

It was particularly vital in the aftermath of mutinies for the image of West India Regiment soldiers to be defended. For example, after the 1808 mutiny in Jamaica, General Villettes was at pains to stress the 'loyal and proper feelings and spirit shown by the body of the [2nd] Regiment' who attacked the mutineers and helped to put it down.[74] Similarly, his successor in command, Major-General Hugh Carmichael, emphasised that the mutiny had involved only 33 recruits out of a regiment with an effective strength of nearly one thousand and he publicly commended the vast majority of soldiers who had tried to defend their officers. While it was not practicable to reward them all, Carmichael singled out a handful of men, mainly those who had been wounded, for medals and monetary rewards to mark their 'faithful Service'. Overall, Carmichael claimed that such actions furnished 'a most convincing proof that the honourable mind of a Soldier of whatever Country and Colour he may be when once formed and instructed can never be transformed to that of a Traitor or cowardly Assassin' and thus sought to portray

the majority of his men as reliable soldiers rather than would-be mutineers or potential 'brigands'. Carmichael was a staunch supporter of his men: based on eleven years' experience, he asserted that he had the 'utmost confidence in their loyalty and good conduct on any Service'. His very public stance led him to clash with the Jamaican Assembly and he was eventually reposted elsewhere in the region.[75] Again, such events demonstrate the intensity of the struggle over the image of the West India Regiment soldier.

Taken together, the West India Regiments' commanding officers sought to represent their rank-and-file as 'the most orderly, clean and attentive soldiers' – or as a later writer would put it: '[h]e is docile, patient, brave, and faithful'.[76] That supporters achieved some success in shifting the public discourse around the Regiments' soldiers – as well as their increasing acceptance in the Caribbean colonies – can be seen in the appearance of more positive accounts of them in the colonial press in the 1830s. Extracts from regimental records were reprinted that described the establishment of the units and their service against Napoleonic France across the region in the first decade of the nineteenth century, actions that had led to the awarding of military honours.[77] Further evidence for a shift lies in the public response to the third and final mutiny of West India Regiment troops in the Caribbean, which occurred among the 1st in Trinidad in 1837. The reaction in the press was somewhat different from the earlier mutinies. While being described as '[o]ne of the most serious alarms to which the Inhabitants…have ever been subject', subsequent depictions focused on the *specific* perpetrators – especially the African leader, Dâaga (also known as Donald Stewart), who was described as 'just the man whom a savage, warlike, and depredatory tribe would select for their chieftain' – rather than the black soldiers in general.[78] Indeed, the 'nearly 300 savages' involved in the mutiny were contrasted with the small numbers of loyal 'old Soldiers' present at the time. Though out-numbered ten-to-one and deprived of their arms, these 'civilised' men remained 'steady' and 'firm to their

duty'.[79] These 'old Soldiers' embodied the more positive image of the West India Regiments that their proponents had emphasised, men in whom West Indian colonists could have confidence.

Coming fourteen years after the last major regional event involving the Regiments, which was their role in helping to put down the 1823 Demerara Revolution, and following the beginning of the formal ending of slavery, there seems to have been a shift in the discourse surrounding the Regiments: the 1837 mutiny was not seen as symptomatic of the problematic status of black soldiers *in general* but rather as indicating the dangers of the specific practice of drafting of 'uncivilised' Africans into the units in large numbers. Indeed, although Colonial Office officials acknowledged that the affair would be regarded as 'an argument against Black levies', they were confident that it was actually an 'argument against them being raised so rapidly and disposed of so collectively as to make the number of new savage soldiers at any station…a large proportion to the number of old and civilised'.[80] As a result, this practice was ended and plans were put forward to use Barbados as a staging post for black troops arriving in the Caribbean.[81]

The apparent improvement in white colonial attitudes towards the West India Regiments was related to the broader shift in the socio-racial order associated with formal emancipation between 1834 and 1838. In this context, the black soldiers were no longer were 'liminal' figures in the Caribbean whose very existence undermined the racialized logic of slave societies. Instead, they were a part of the non-white population in a post-slavery society that could be relied upon by virtue of the military discipline to which they were subject. Colonial residents came to view the Regiments' soldiers as a source of social stability and a potential

defence against ex-slaves.[82] Such hopes were not misplaced and the Regiments played an important role in maintaining order across the post-emancipation Caribbean.

Conclusions

Responses to the West India Regiments in the Caribbean colonies from the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries have to be understood in relation to the deep anxieties that soldiers of African descent engendered in slave societies. While it is not surprising that mutinies would create dismay and dread, this article has also emphasised the importance of the everyday presence of the troops, whether because it stoked fears of fraternisation with enslaved people or simply arose from the cumulative effects of quotidian encounters. Relatively minor military redeployments also generated strong reactions, pointing to the deep racial phobias that characterised white West Indian slaveholding culture. Likewise, even when the Regiments' rank-and-file helped to suppress enslaved rebels, as they did in 1816 and 1823, unfavourable rumours still circulated about them and local colonists were keen for the units to be withdrawn.

There was considerable continuity in the white public discourse around the West India Regiments, contrary to the claims made by Buckley and Dyde – at least until the 1830s. This was because they represented a fundamental challenge to the socio-racial order in the British West Indies. Indeed, while Buckley surmised that 'the constant sight, repeated over many years, of blacks expertly leading and commanding whites must have taken some toll of the then-current view that blacks were lazy, cowardly, and inferior to whites' – a reference to the fact that some companies contained white privates and black NCOs – the argument made here is that this greatly underestimates the irrationalities and paradoxes that characterised cultures of West Indian slaveholding.[83] After all, many slaveholders seem to have been able to reconcile racist negrophobic invective and talk of 'beasts' and 'brutes' with raising some enslaved people

to highly-trusted positions or tasking them with the care of their children. Observed 'facts' did not necessarily undermine deep-seated phobias and racist myths. Thus, no matter how often the men of the West India Regiments 'proved' themselves, they would continue to be treated with mistrust and fear.

This is not to claim that the public discourse could not change. The response to the 1837 Trinidad mutiny in the colonial press, as well as the appearance of more positive newspaper coverage of the West India Regiments around the same time, suggest the emergence of a more quiescent attitude linked to the ending of slavery. Indeed, the 1837 mutiny seems to presage a new discourse in that it was attributed to African 'savagery' rather than the 'paradox' of armed slaves *per se*. The cessation of the wholesale importation of raw African recruits into the Regiments in the second half of the nineteenth century and their increasing demographic creolisation marked a new phase in white colonial responses to them, though amid later related developments such as the establishment of local police forces and the reduction of colonial militias, as well as post-emancipation unrest – most notably in Jamaica in 1865 – anxieties continued to be expressed about the loyalty of West India Regiment soldiers.

Amid all the distrust, alarm and loathing generated by the West India Regiments, their proponents – and especially their commanding officers – strove to promulgate a more positive image of the units. To this extent, a 'war of representation' was fought over the Regiments – akin to that which took place over figure of the enslaved African within the simultaneous struggle between pro- and antislavery campaigners from the 1780s to 1830s.[84] Indeed, the image that commanders promoted was the military equivalent of the 'good negro' that was central to antislavery efforts to humanise and generate pity for enslaved Africans in this period. Most famously visualised in Josiah Wedgwood's abolitionist medallion of 1787, with its image

'of an African in Chains in a Supplicating Posture', the 'good negro' implored for mercy, begged for the chains to be broken and haltingly suggested the circumscribed equality of 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother?'[85] There are many similarities between the image of the 'good negro' associated with the antislavery campaign and that of the West India Regiments' rank-and-file promoted by its commanders. Both sought to contest colonial representations of Africans and African-creole people in terms of violent savagery or childlike inadequacy, but they did so in ways that maintained them in subservient roles. As such, both served to produce new racist stereotypes. The struggle over the figure of black soldier is an element of the war of representation over Atlantic slavery that has not been considered by historians. Placing the West India Regiments in this wider context expands understanding of the cultural and political contests that occurred around different visions of race and racial difference in the British Atlantic empire of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, while also helping to narrow the gap that still exists between the military and non-military histories of the British Caribbean.

Notes

[1] Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of the Island of Jamaica*, 157.

[2] David Brion Davis, "Introduction".

[3] Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*. See also Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve*; Craton, *Testing the Chains*; Tylden, "The West Indian Regiment 1795-1927 and from 1958".

[4] Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 106.

[5] See Brown and Morgan, eds., *Arming Slaves.*

[6] Morgan and O'Shaughnessy, "Arming Slaves"; Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 1.

[7] Morgan and O'Shaughnessy, "Arming Slaves," 186, 87.

[8] Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 4, 5.

[9] Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve*, 22.

[10] Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 55, 56.

[11] Ibid., 62.

[12] Ryan, "The human consequences of slave trade abolition," 176.

[13] See, for example, Thome and Kimball, *Emancipation in the West Indies*, 119.

[14] Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 183; McNeill, *Mosquito Empires*, 266. See also Buckley, *The British Army in the West Indies*.

[15] Morgan and O'Shaughnessy, "Arming Slaves," 181-82.

[16] For a discussion, see Lambert, *White Creole Culture*; Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica*.

[17] Davis, "Arming Slaves," 1.

[18] For regimental histories, see Caulfield, *100 Years' Hundred of the 2nd West India Regiment*; Ellis, *The History of the First West India Regiment*. Work on the contribution of Caribbean people to the British effort in the First World War includes Howe, *Race, War and Nationalism*; Smith, *Jamaican Volunteers in the First World War*. For other works that address the West India Regiments and the broader context of the arming of men of African

descent, see Voelz, *Slave and Soldier*; Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 165-83; Tylden, "The West Indian Regiment 1795-1927 and from 1958"; Gavin Schaffer, ed., Special issue on "Racializing the soldier".

[19] See especially Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 24.

[20] 1st West India Regiment, monthly returns for 1820, WO 17/2010; Caulfield, *100 Years' Hundred of the 2nd West India Regiment*, 30-31.

[21] Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 24.

[22] A more recent work on the West India Regiment is Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve*. This is aimed at a more general reader and offers a predominately narrative history, albeit one based on immersion in the sources. Yet, he shares with Buckley a concern to bring attention to a group of soldiers that have been largely ignored both by military historians and, he argues, historians of the Caribbean. In general, he has great admiration for the rank-and-file but is often critical of their officers and commanders, as well as some colonial and metropolitan political leaders.

[23] Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 143.

[24] Brown, "The Arming of Slaves in Comparative Perspective," 346.

[25] Steel, "A Philosophy of Fear"; Lambert, *White Creole Culture*, especially chapters 3, 4 and 6.

[26] The responses of enslaved people towards the Regiments are much harder to assess and are not the focus of this article. To give one example, during the 1816 slave rebellion in Barbados, a soldier serving with Major Cassidy wrote that: 'The insurgents did not think our men would fight against black men, but thank God they were deceived'. See private letter, 27 April 1816, CO 28/85.

[27] Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve*, 89-94; Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 156. See, for example, Carmichael to Gordon, 13 April 1809, WO 1/95, ff 310-311.

[28] Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 43-62.

[29] Copy of Minutes of Council and Assembly of Antigua, 20 December 1798, 1 January 1799, WO 1/88, ff 267-268, 281-298.

[30] Poyer, *The History of Barbados*, 647.

[31] Young, *The West-India Common-Place Book*, 213-14; Bridges, *Annals of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 245, 268. See also M'Callum, *Travels in Trinidad*, 123; Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of the Island of Jamaica*, 157.   On the lobbying efforts of the metropolitan West India interest against the Regiments, see Osborne, "Power and Persuasion".

[32] Copy of Minutes of Council and Assembly of Antigua, 20 December 1798, 1 January 1799, WO 1/88, f. 294.

[33] See, for example, Robert Keith to Mr Otto, 26 July 1795, DM41/65/4, Westerhall Papers, Bristol University Library Special Collections; Pinckard, *Notes on the West Indies*, volume 2, pp 401-410.

[34] Buckley, Roger, *The British Army in the West Indies*; Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*.

[35] Balcarres to Dundas, 29 November 1795, WO 1/92, ff 179-182.

[36] M'Callum, *Travels in Trinidad*, 26.

[37] Young, *The West-India Common-Place Book*, 215-16; Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of the Island of Jamaica*, 165-66.

[38] "Remarks on the Establishment of West India Regiments – written in the year 1801", enclosed in Hislop to the Duke of York, 22 July 1804, WO 1/95, ff 194-211.

[39] Hislop to Trigge, 4 January 1802, WO 1/95, ff 13-14.

[40] Bridges, *Annals of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 245.

[41] Stephen, *The Slavery of the British West India Colonies Delineated*, vol. 1, 429.

[42] Lambert, "Liminal Figures," 335.

[43] See Matthews, *Caribbean Slave Revolts*; Lambert, *White Creole Culture*, 118-122; 148-165.

[44] Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 74. See, for example, letters to Carmichael, 14 December 1808, CO 137/123; Castlereagh to Carmichael, 13 February 1809, CO 137/126.

[45] For an overview of British military sites across the Caribbean, see Bayley, *Four Year's Residence in the West Indies*.

[46] Letter to Grinfield, 6 January 1803, CO 318/20.

[47] Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 74.

[48] "Remarks on the Establishment of West India Regiments," WO 1/95, f 195.

[49] Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve*, 114.

[50] Figures compiled from West India Regiment, monthly returns for 1809 and 1819, WO 17/2001, WO 17/2009, WO 17/2500 and WO 17/2508. All figures relate to the rank-and-file of regular units, and include both infantry and artillery.

[51] On the 1802 mutiny, see WO 1/95, ff 25-62; Anonymous, *Sketches and Recollections of the West Indies by a Resident*; Buckley, "'Black Man' - the Mutiny of the 8th (British) West India Regiment". On the 1808 mutiny, see Villettes to Castlereagh, 15 June 1808, CO 137/123; Bridges, *Annals of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 289-92. On the 1837 mutiny, see Hill to Glenelg, 20 June 1837, CO 295/114; *The Port of Spain Gazette*, 20 June 1837; August, "Rebels with a Cause: The St Joseph Mutiny of 1837".

[52] Castlereagh to Carmichael, 14 February 1809; Carmichael to Castlereagh, 12 April 1809, CO 137/126; Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of the Island of Jamaica*, 157; Bridges, *Annals of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 245.

[53] M'Callum, *Travels in Trinidad*, 26.

[54] Villettes to Castlereagh, 15 June 1808, CO 137/123.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Stephen, *Slavery of the British West India Colonies*, vol. 1, 428.

[57] See, for example, Carmichael to the Mayor of Kingston, 20 March 1809; Carmichael to Gordon, 13 April 1809, WO 1/95.

[58] General Orders, 4 September 1802, CO 318/20; Trigge to Brownrigg, 3 and 16 April 1802, WO 1/95. Later, the 8th West India Regiment was reformed from the personnel from the 11th West India Regiment.

[59] Castlereagh to Carmichael, 14 February 1809, CO 137/126; Caulfield, *100 Years' Hundred of the 2nd West India Regiment*, 33.

[60] Beckles, *Bussa: The 1816 Revolution in Barbados*; Lambert, *White Creole Culture*, 105-139.

[61] Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve*, 140; Murray to Warde, 19 August 1823; Campbell to Berkeley, 2 September 1823, CO 318/56. See da Costa, *Crowns of Glory, Tears of Blood*. West India Regiment troops were not involved in the suppression of Sam Sharpe's Rebellion in Jamaica, 1831-32. There was only a small detachment of the 2nd West India Regiment in Kingston at the time, while the rest of the companies on the Jamaica Command were deployed at Honduras and the Bahamas. See West India Regiment, monthly returns for 1832, WO 17/2022.

[62] Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve*, 114.

[63] Stephen, *Slavery of the British West India Colonies*, vol. 1, 427.

[64] Bathurst to Leith, 12 June 1816, CO 28/85; Leith to Bathurst, 15 August 1816, CO 318/52.

[65] Gladstone to Horton, 19 July 1824, CO 111/48; D'Urban to Bathurst, 3 June 1824, CO 111/44; Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve*, 140.

[66] *Barbados Mercury*, 31 May 1808. For other examples, see *St George's Chronicle, and Grenada Gazette*, 17 May 1810; *Royal Gazette*, 30 July 1822.

[67] Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 142.

[68] West India Regiments, monthly returns for April 1807 to December 1808, WO 17/251.

[69] Villettes to Castlereagh, 22 June 1808; Carmichael to Castlereagh, 28 October 1808, CO 137/123.

[70] Even conspiracies among the enslaved populations that were discovered could bring unwelcome attention to the Regiments if there was any connection to their personnel. For example, a plot to seize weapons and set fire to parts of Kingston was discovered in 1809 through information from a deserter from the 2nd WIR. Despite – or perhaps because of – the deserter's role, the discovery intensified concerns about the black soldiers, especially because it came only months after the mutiny at Fort Augusta. See "Discovery of a conspiracy of the blacks in Jamaica for the purpose of placing that Island in the same state as Saint Domingo by Insurrection," WO 1/95/15, ff 302-306.

[71] See, for example, General Orders, 27 April 1802, 30 April 1802, CO 318/19; General Orders, 12 August 1808, CO 137/123.

[72] Caulfield, *100 Years' Hundred of the 2nd West India Regiment*, 30-31. The public appearance of troops could provoke negative reactions, however. See Wright, ed. *Lady Nugent's Journal*, 195; Bayley, *Four Year's Residence*, 35-36.

[73] Villettes to Castlereagh, 15 June 1808, CO 137/123.

[74] General Villettes to Viscount Castlereagh, 15 June 1808, CO 137/123, ff 61-75.

[75] General Orders, 12 August 1808, CO 137/123, ff 126-132.

[76] 'Remarks on the Establishment of West India Regiments', WO 1/95, f 196; Ellis, *The History of the First West India Regiment*, 13.

[77] See, for example, *Antigua Messenger,* 29 December 1836; *St George's Chronicle, and Grenada Gazette*, 25 March 1837.

[78] *Port of Spain Gazette*, 20 June 1837; Ellis, *The History of the First West India Regiment*, 190. For subsequent coverage, see *Port of Spain Gazette*, 23 June, 21 July and 18 August 1837.

[79] *Port of Spain Gazette*, 23 June 1837; Hill to Glenelg, 20 June 1837, CO 295/114, ff 312-319. The contrast drawn with the African 'savage' also prefigured the emergence of the notion of the 'Dark Continent' described in Brantlinger, "Victorians and Africans".

[80] Notes to and from James Stephen, 7 August 1837, CO 295/114, ff 320-321.

[81] Ellis, *The History of the First West India Regiment*, 207; Hill to Glenelg, 10 November 1837, CO 295/115.

[82] See, for example, the coverage in *Port of Spain Gazette*, 12 April 1833; Port of Spain Gazette, 25 April 1834. See also *Grenada Free Press*, 28 September 1831*; Weekly Gazette Grenada Free Press*, 28 March 1832; *Port of Spain Gazette*, 12 April 1833; *Saint Lucia Gazette*, 3 September 1834.

[83] Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 143.

[84] Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 106. On other aspects of this 'war', see Lambert, 'Sierra Leone and other sites in the war of representation over slavery'.

[85] Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 19.

References

Anonymous. *Sketches and Recollections of the West Indies by a Resident*. London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1828.

August, Thomas. "Rebels with a Cause: The St Joseph Mutiny of 1837." *Slavery and Abolition* 12, no. 2 (1991): 73-91.

Bayley, F. *Four Year's Residence in the West Indies, During the Years 1826, 7, 8 and 9*. London: William Kidd, 1830.

Beckles, Hilary McD. *Bussa: The 1816 Revolution in Barbados*. Rewriting History (2). Barbados: Department of History, UWI and Barbados Museum and Historical Society, 1998.

Brantlinger, Patrick. "Victorians and Africans: The Geneaology of the Myth of the Dark Continent." In *"Race," Writing, and Difference*, edited by Henry L. Jr. Gates. London: U. C. P., 1985.

Bridges, George W. *Annals of Jamaica*. vol. 2, 1827.

Brown, Christopher L. "The Arming of Slaves in Comparative Perspective." In *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age*, edited by Christopher L. Brown and Philip D. Morgan, 330-53. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Brown, Christopher L., and Philip D. Morgan, eds. *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Buckley, Roger. "'Black Man' - the Mutiny of the 8th (British) West India Regiment: A Microcosm of War and Slavery in the Caribbean." *Jamaican Historical Review* 12 (1980): 52-76.

Buckley, Roger. *Slaves in Red Coats: The British West India Regiments, 1795-1815*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

Buckley, Roger. *The British Army in the West Indies: Society and the Military in the Revolutionary Age*. University Press of Florida, 1998.

Caulfield, J. E. *100 Years' Hundred of the 2nd West India Regiment*. London: Forster Groom & Co., 1899.

Craton, Michael. *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies*. London: Cornell University Press, 1982.

Davis, David Brion. "Introduction." In *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age*, edited by Christopher L. Brown and Philip D. Morgan, 1-13. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Duffy, Michael. *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower: The British Expeditions to the West Indies and the War against Revolutionary France*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1987.

Dyde, Brian. *The Empty Sleeve: The Story of the West India Regiments of the British Army*. Antigua: Hansib, 1997.

Ellis, Alfred Burdon. *The History of the First West India Regiment*. London, 1885.

Howe, Glenford D. *Race, War and Nationalism: A Social History of West Indians in the First World War*. Oxford: James Currey, 2002.

Hall, Catherine. *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867*. Cambridge: Polity, 2002.

Isaacman, Allen, and Derek Peterson. "Making the Chikunda: Military Slavery and Ethnicity in Southern Africa, 1750-1900." In *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age*, edited by Christopher L. Brown and Philip D. Morgan, 94-119. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Lambert, David. "Liminal Figures: Poor Whites, Freedmen, and Racial Re-Inscription in Colonial Barbados." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 19, no. 3 (2001): 335-50.

Lambert, David. *White Creole Culture, Politics and Identity During the Age of Abolition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Matthews, Gelien. *Caribbean Slave Revolts and the British Abolitionist Movement*. Baton Rouge : Louisiana State University Press, 2006.

M'Callum, Pierre. *Travels in Trinidad During the Months of February, March and April 1803*. Liverpool, 1805.

McNeill, J. R. *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Morgan, Philip D., and Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy. "Arming Slaves in the American Revolution." In *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age*, edited by Christopher L. Brown and Philip D. Morgan, 180-208. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Petley, Christer. *Slaveholders in Jamaica: Colonial Society and Culture During the Era of Abolition*. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009.

Pinckard, George. *Notes on the West Indies: Including Observations Relative to the Creoles and Slaves of the Western Colonies, and the Indians of South America*. 2 vols. London, 1816.

Poyer, John. *The History of Barbados from the First Discovery of the Island, 1605, Till the Accession of Lord Seaforth, 1801*. London: J. Mawman, 1808.

Smith, Richard. *Jamaican Volunteers in the First World War: Race, Masculinity and the Development of National Consciousness*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004.

Steel, M. "A Philosophy of Fear: The World View of Jamaican Plantocracy in Comparative Perspective." *Journal of Caribbean History* 27 (1993): 1-20.

Stephen, James. *The Slavery of the British West India Colonies Delineated*. 2 vols. vol. 1, London, 1824.

Stewart, J. A. *A View of the Past and Present State of the Island of Jamaica*. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1823.

Thome, James Armstrong and Joseph Horace Kimball, *Emancipation in the West Indies: A Six Months' Tour in Antigua, Barbados, and Jamaica in the Year 1837* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839).

Tylden, G. "The West Indian Regiment 1795-1927 and from 1958." *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 40 (March 1962).

Viotti da Costa, Emilia. *Crowns of Glory, Tears of Blood: The Demerara Slave Rebellion of 1823*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Voelz, Peter M. *Slave and Soldier: The Military Impact of Blacks in the Colonial Americas*. New York; London: Garland, 1993.

Wright, Phillip, ed. *Lady Nugent's Journal of Her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805*. Kingston, Jamaica: The University of the West Indies Press, 2002.

Young, William. *The West-India Common-Place Book*. London: Printed for Richard Phillips, 1807.

Figure captions

Figure 1: 'A Private of the 5th West India Regiment' in Charles Hamilton Smith, *Costumes of the Army of the British Empire, According to the Last Regulations 1812* (Colnaghi and Company, 1815). Courtesy of the Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library.